

# Ricards Lodge High School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 102673            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Merton            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 286457            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 15–16 May 2007    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Michael Lynes HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Comprehensive                                |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                                    |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–16  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Girls  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 1184   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                           |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mrs J Savill                                 |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs A Jerrard                                |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 12 November 2001                             |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Lake Road<br>Wimbledon<br>London<br>SW19 7HB |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 020 8946 2208                                |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 020 8879 6801                                |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 15–16 May 2007 |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ricards Lodge has been part of the reorganisation in the local authority since the last inspection when it catered for girls from the age of 12 to 16; it is now an 11-16 school. Recent rebuilding caused some disruption, but accommodation is now good and the school is set in a particularly pleasant location. The headteacher has been in post since September 2005.

Socio-economic indicators are at about the national average, as is the attainment of students when they begin school. There are high numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, about a quarter are of Asian origin. The number of speakers of English as an additional language (EAL) is much higher than the national average, and there are a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is about the national average. The school has a unit for students with mild learning difficulties (MLD), the Cedar Base, with provision for up to 10 students.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ricards Lodge is a good school, with the potential to become an outstanding one. The school has made good progress since the appointment of the new headteacher two years ago, and particularly impressive progress this academic year. This is due to a determined focus to develop learning and teaching, which is already beginning to improve achievement. The remarkable aspect of this is the way in which almost all staff have signed up to the vision. Students have noticed this; they report that teaching styles are really improving and that there are some outstanding teachers. Inspectors agree with them.

The school realised two years ago that although examination results were around the national average, this did not represent good achievement because the girls could do much better. The school has responded by putting into place good systems for tracking the progress of students. These are being effectively used by heads of department to identify and support those at risk of underachievement. As a result, the school can provide convincing evidence that achievement is now good. The senior leadership team (SLT) are aware that teachers now need to use this information more consistently to inform lesson planning. The rapid pace of these changes is striking, and is due to the SLT's ability to bring staff along with them. A cultural shift like this is no mean feat. The curriculum has not developed at the same speed, particularly in the range of vocational courses on offer.

This focus on improving learning is founded on outstanding provision for students' personal development and well-being. Students feel secure, happy and take full advantage of everything the school has to offer. The arrangements to ensure that vulnerable groups are cared for, such as those with LDD and looked after children, are of high quality. The Cedar Base provides highly effective support for those students with MLD. The school works particularly well with outside agencies, including the local authority, in this regard.

The headteacher has encouraged the school to become more outward looking and parents comment that they really appreciate the recent founding of the parent-teacher association. Parents expressed some concerns regarding the number of temporary teachers. The school is aware of this and staffing has become far more stable during the current academic year.

The school is fortunate to have an outstanding chair of governors, whose 'no nonsense' approach and commitment is driving the governing body forward. She has formed a highly effective relationship with the headteacher.

The school's aspiration is to be judged outstanding by the time of the next inspection; all the evidence suggests that it is securely on the way to achieving this.

### What the school should do to improve further

- More closely match the curriculum to the needs of all students, particularly in vocational aspects
- Teachers should make sharper use of information on student achievement to ensure more effective learning for all students

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the school with standards which are about the national average. In 2006, the results attained at the end of Year 11 were also similar to the national average, this is satisfactory progress. Because of effective strategies to develop teaching achievement is now improving. The progress being made by students in lessons and the data provided by the school show that students' achievement is now good.

Students do best in mathematics and science and at the end of Year 9 achievement in science was outstanding. Students did less well in English where the schools' GCSE targets were not met. At GCSE in 2006 students did particularly well in Art and Design, Design Technology and French, results were satisfactory in GCSE Physical Education (PE).

The use of student achievement data now enables the school to track more closely individual progress and to support those at risk of underachieving. Improvements to teaching and learning together with improved student attendance are also helping to raise achievement. There has been a significant improvement in the standards achieved in French and History. Students with LDD and those who speak EAL make very good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' behaviour is good, they are focused, motivated to learn and clearly enjoy their school and attend regularly. They develop secure and close working relationships with staff. One Year 7 student said that, 'our teachers are more like older friends who guide us'. There are very few infringements of the school's high expectations in a diverse community. Pupils feel safe, they appreciate everything the school has to offer, and report that there is very little bullying. Pastoral care is a real strength. Spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is very strong. There are notable strengths in social development because of the schools ethos of listening and responding to its students. A striking feature of the school is its excellent engagement with many aspects of the local community. This ranges from work with the elderly to training ball girls for the Wimbledon Tennis Championships.

Pupils have a highly developed sense of self-worth which is promoted through a range of responsibilities entrusted to them, especially in their roles as prefects, school buddies and as school councillors. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles through their positive participation in sport and other physical activities, and the school has the Healthy Schools award.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Students have good relationships with their teachers and show a high level of enjoyment and interest in their work. Most students have a good understanding of their targets, how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. This is not yet consistent across all departments.

Teachers and teaching assistants know and understand the learning needs of their students well. They have high expectations of the students and set them challenging, but realistic targets.

They show enthusiasm for their subjects and plan lessons well with appropriate and varied activities. They use skilful questioning to help students deepen their understanding and they involve them in the assessment of their work. Marking does not yet consistently inform students how to improve.

In the best lessons, the pace of the work is maintained well with tasks differentiated for the needs of each learner. These teachers check throughout the lesson the extent to which students meet their learning objectives. One head of department said there is a 'real buzz and spark in the classrooms'. This was clearly seen in an outstanding music lesson where each pupil was actively involved in the evaluation of what makes a good performance. In a minority of lessons where the work is not so well matched to the needs of all students, they are not as well focused on learning.

The SLT has an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. The results of lesson monitoring are used not only to improve the quality of individual teaching, but also to identify areas for further improvement at a whole school level. Teachers are encouraged to be reflective and critical. The school is striving to maximise learning and raise the achievement of its students in all areas.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. At Key Stage 3 it is good as it is suitably broad and balanced, but at Key Stage 4 it is only satisfactory. The range of vocational courses currently available to students does not fully meet the needs of all students, particularly those who are less able. There are insufficient opportunities for all students to have access to information and communication technology, and the time allowed for PE is below current guidelines. However, the school is aware of these areas and modifications are being made to the options available from September 2007.

There is good provision for careers guidance from a variety of sources. Citizenship and the development of the key skills needed for the world of work are suitably met both across the curriculum and within personal, social and health education lessons. Additional study support sessions are provided for those students needing help, and many teachers devote their free time to assisting students. There is a wide and comprehensive range of extra-curricular clubs, societies and trips organised by the school, which are well supported by the students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good and the quality of support provided for more vulnerable students is very good. There are effective systems in place to ensure that students are properly protected and the school provides a safe and caring learning environment. The Cedar Base in particular provides a nurturing environment in which students who are at risk or who have additional needs feel safe and supported.

There is a strong commitment to inclusion in the school. An inclusion panel meets weekly to monitor the progress of students with additional needs and, with the aid of its external partners, is able to ensure that every child is fully supported. As a result students with learning difficulties achieve highly. Systems for ensuring a smooth transition from primary school are good, and Year 7 students commented very positively on the buddy system provided by older students. The guidance provided for students preparing to progress at the end of Year 11 is very good

and students have a good understanding of the range of future options. Most students have a clear understanding of their 'working-at' grades which are monitored effectively by the school. Teachers need to make greater use of this information in planning to teach the full range of abilities in their lessons. Parents receive good information from the school on their child's progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding aspects. The excellent leadership of the headteacher has brought about significant improvements to the school over the past two years. Through astute appointments and very good management of existing staff she has ensured that weaker aspects of the school have been addressed, and in some cases been quickly improved. In particular, the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, led by a highly effective deputy headteacher, in the past year have been impressive. In contrast, improvements to the curriculum have not proceeded at the same pace.

Monitoring of teaching is now rigorous and firmly rooted in improving student achievement. Both senior and middle leaders are held firmly accountable for the achievement of students; this is clearly an absolute priority for the school. They have responded in an enthusiastic, committed way that is energising the school and moving it forward rapidly.

Governors are highly supportive and active. The chair of governors' commitment and enthusiasm for the school is infectious. The system of linking governors to particular departments is enabling them to have a deeper appreciation of the school's work, and a better understanding of how to challenge the school on student achievement. There is more work for the governing body to do in this regard.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|--|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 1   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 3 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ricards Lodge High School, London, SW19 7HB

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection. I am writing to you to summarise our findings, but you can download the full report from [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

We judged your school to be good with the clear potential to be outstanding. The improvements over the past two years are truly impressive. You told us that you could see how teaching had developed and that you had some excellent teachers. We agree with you. It is clear that you are responding well to the changes and that you are now making good academic progress. What's also clear is how much you value your teachers and really appreciate all they do for you. One of you told us that you found the school 'inspirational'.

Of course there is always more to do and the school agrees that it needs to make further improvements in two areas:

- The curriculum needs to develop so that it offers you more opportunities in vocational courses.
- Teachers need to use the information they collect on your progress to plan even better lessons that ensure all of you make good progress.

You can do your part by letting teachers know what courses you are really interested in, particularly in Years 10 and 11. You can also make sure that you tell teachers what works and what doesn't work for you in lessons.

With very best wishes, especially to those of you currently taking examinations.

Michael Lynes

Her Majesty's Inspector